

Selective Licensing Feedback Survey (2023)

Background

Selective licensing is a licence scheme, which requires all private landlords operating within a designated area to license any privately rented property within that area.

Rotherham has six designated areas where selective licensing was introduced from 1st May 2020 to private landlords and will last for 5 years. As part of the ongoing works the service is undertaking, we wanted to capture feedback from both landlords and tenants in the designated areas to hear their views and opinions on Selective Licensing by carrying out a feedback survey.

The survey is an opportunity for RMBC to make any potential improvements for the remaining two and half years the scheme has left to run.

We devised an online survey for tenants that was shared on the Council's social media platforms with a link for tenants to complete. The link was also shared on the latest edition of the Rotherham Round-Up Newsletter going to 9,277 residents and shared internally via Monday Round-Up as well as being shared with the relevant ward newsletters.

A separate online survey was devised for Landlords which was sent out to all private landlords and managing agents, a total of 1,140 individual addresses, as part of the Landlords newsletter.

The survey ran from 1st February 2023 to 28th February 2023.

The survey received 20 responses in total (13 from Landlords and 7 from Tenants).

Key Findings

The majority of Landlords have had an inspection by RMBC and found the inspecting officer they dealt with very helpful / neutral (1 responded with very unhelpful) and most Landlords who responded have a property in the Eastwood area. Of the properties that have been inspected, most did not require any further works. It is noted that there were no responses captured by Landlords or Tenants in Dinnington and Thurgroft.

Out of the 13 responses, 5 (38%) Landlords strongly support the strong enforcement on license holders who fail to maintain standards which impact on their tenants and wider area whilst, an equal number, 5 (38%) seriously oppose (3 responded neutral). Of the 5 that strongly oppose, the main reasons were around issues with ASB, litter and rat infestations in their areas.

The overall feedback regarding the single main action to help improve the area was more police patrols of the area, tackling ASB and issues around litter.

Most landlords do not support the Selective Licensing Scheme however one landlord did state that they felt it was "an excellent way to enforce high standards of rental properties and scrutiny of rogue landlords".

Most of the landlords, who responded to the survey, rely on professional advice from agents, although this is not representative of the scheme, where approximately one third of landlords have an agent managing their property / license. Also, responses show that one landlord is interested in training on EPC improvements. Out of the 13 responses, 11 (85%) landlords have stated that they will continue letting their properties in the next six months.

The vast majority of responses received from tenants were aware of the scheme which began in May 2020 and over 70% of those have lived in their current property for more than five years.

Only one property had been inspected by the Council and the inspector had been very helpful.

43% of the tenant responses stated that they didn't feel like their landlord provides a good property and good service. 28% preferred not to say and the reasoning behind these responses was through fear they will get evicted.

Majority of tenants responses were that they could afford to pay their rent, but most tenants did respond to say they are struggling to pay their bills.

Tenants general feedback was they would like the Council to give more support to people who are homeless and tackle criminal behaviours (ASB).

Survey Results

Responses received from both surveys are below:

Landlords Survey

1) Do you have a property within the Selective Licensing Scheme

13 responded "Yes"

2) Which areas within the Selective Licensing Scheme do you have properties?

Maltby – 4

Eastwood – 5

Masbrough – 3

Parkgate – 1

3) Has your property been inspected by the council yet?

8 responded Yes, 4 No and 1 don't know

4) How did you find the communication with the inspecting officer?

2 responded Helpful, 5 responded Neutral, 1 responded Very Unhelpful

Please explain reasons behind your answer

- Nothing achieved usually BS from RMBC staff

5) If you have been asked to undertake works at your property following the inspection, do you feel they were reasonable?

2 responded Yes, 1 No and 5 No works required

Please explain reasons behind your answer

- EHO is categorising hazards as Category 1 or Category 2 on sight without going through the proper scoring method. The surveyor, based on an inspection of the whole dwelling should generate a numerical score for the HHSRS hazards. The information observed during the inspection or survey should be properly and accurately recorded as this will provide evidence to justify and support the judgments which form the basis of the numerical Hazard Score. This should be provided to the landlord. Without it then a Category 1 hazard can be challenged in court and the EHO concerned will need to provide the scoring record.

6) Do you support strong enforcement on licence holders who fail to maintain standards which impact on their tenants and the wider area?

5 responded strongly support, 5 responded strongly oppose and 3 responded neutral.

Please explain reasons behind your answer

- Eastwood has been targeted for two rounds of selective licensing. The council is not supporting landlords by constantly harassing landlord with claims of disrepair when they see any graffiti, dumped rubbish or anti-social behaviour
- Unnecessary money-making scheme for the Council
- This scheme has ran for several years and the area has become worse Gateway areas that lead to Rotherham town centre. Wellgate, Eastwood, Masbrough. All these areas under the scheme have become ghetto areas. This scheme has ruined Rotherham. The properties are in worse condition than they was 7 years ago The litter problem is all of these areas is disgusting!! No enforcement at all. I've requested a FOI on fines my the landlord licensing team and it was poor track record The police, enforcement team, landlord licensing all know who and what the issues are but They will never address this due to offending people.
- The scheme has improved the properties but that doesn't mean that the area has improved. The Council need to take some responsibility for keeping the area clean and tidy. Nothing is being done about the rat infestation in the Ferham area nor the dumping.

7) Is there a single main action you feel that the council, Police, or other licence holders could take which would improve the area?

- Need to allow good landlords exempt from paying second round license fees if we have improved our property and be shown some appreciation
- Police should have more regulation in the area and patrol for ASB
- More police visits this is or was a poor area
- Bins in regular spaces to improve / reduce street litter
- Tackling anti-social behaviour, remove litter
- Scrap the scheme completely
- Push on rubbish in the street sense and properties skips funded by licencing fees
- Littering / Antisocial behaviour
- No, there are many
- There is zero to no enforcement Areas with this scheme are run down The landlord licensing team is understaffed, inexperienced and the staff turnaround is like a revolving door Telling landlords you have CCTV doesn't solve the issue Your CCTV is outdated and admittance from the landlord licensing team that you're not able to manage and don't have the manpower to monitor the CCTV £500+ for licence. What does this get you as a landlord? Nothing
- The council need to, if they are serious, take concrete steps to get rid of the rats in the Ferham area. They also need to spend more money to clean up the area. The council and the Police need to change Josephine Rd and Belmont Street to a one way street.

- Council should:- 1) take serious steps to eradicate the rat problem in the Ferham area. 2) allocate more resources to keep the area clean 3) educate the tenants from Eastern Europe in respect of rubbish, gathering in large groups, loud music, sofas on the pavement, etc 4) change Josephine rd to a one way street.

8) Do you support Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Selective Licensing Scheme?

3 responded Yes, 9 responded No and 1 Prefer not to say

Please explain reasons behind your answer:

- Excellent way to enforce high standards of rental properties and scrutiny of rogue landlords. I do however find the selective licensing team difficult to engage with. Applying for my first license was a nightmare and although I understand COVID has delayed things the council have been slow to return to post COVID normality. Finally, I shouldn't have had to chase feedback after my property inspection and now find myself chasing my rebate

9) Would you be interested in online training which increases your understanding of the law and good practice in letting properties, or do you use agents to provide you with professional advice?

5 responses rely on professional advice from agents, 2 are interested in online training and 6 responded N/A.

Type of training required:

- EPC improvements, New Regulation information
- Consider any

10) Do you intend to continue letting properties in the next 6 months?

11 responded Yes, 2 responded No

Please explain the reasons behind your answer:

- Costs and regulations are becoming untenable
- RMBC have let the area become rundown No decent people want to live in these areas RMBC have made this areas into ghetto slum areas Better to sell up and not invest in those areas

Tenants Survey:

1) Are you aware of the Selective Licensing Scheme which began in May 2020 within your area?

5 responded Yes, 2 responded No

2) Which area within the Selective Licensing Scheme do you currently live in?

2 responded Eastwood, 2 responded Masbrough, 1 response Parkgate,

3) How long have you lived at your current address?

5 responded 5+ yrs, 1 responded between 2 and 5 yrs and 1 responded less than 6 months

4) Has your property been inspected by the council yet?

1 responded Yes, 4 responded No and 2 responded don't know

5) What was your experience like of communicating with the inspecting officer?

Very Helpful

6) Are you satisfied with any improvements which have been or are going to be made following the inspection?

1 responded with No

Please explain the reasons behind your answer:

- “Nothing has been done by landlord since housing inspection by council inspection officer 1 about 5yrs ago coz iv had 3 different landlords since then n my house is going up 4 sale yet again in next few months ,my house bn rewired while I was laid up wi fractured heel n had pot on n landlord new I had asthma n had 2 sleep on sofa coz I wasn't physically able 2 walk upstairs, I was given a commode from hospital n lived in plaster dust when I was laid up on sofa n cudnt walk, now I have osteoporosis n mobility is very limited but landlord didn't care, h1e just needed job done 4 his landlord licence ”

7) In your opinion, do you feel that your landlord provides a good property and good service?

2 responded Yes, 3 responded with no and 2 responded with prefer not to say

Please could you explain the reason behind your answer:

- “I've lived in a damp neglected flat for 22yrs. I get threatened with eviction if landlords get any trouble from council.”
- “He'll evict me”
- Bins not allocated, drainpipes leaking

8) Using the below options, can you afford to pay your rent?

3 responded with can afford to pay, 2 responded with prefer not to say and 2 responded with seriously struggling to afford to pay.

9) Using the options below, can you afford to pay your bills?

2 responded with can afford to pay, 2 responded with prefer not to say, 2 responded with struggling to pay, and 1 responded with seriously struggling to afford to pay.

10) Is there a single main action you feel that the Council, Police, residents, or landlords could take which would improve the area that you live in?

- “Council could give more to support to people who are homeless or about to be. Make sure tenants are protected if they do complain about landlords. Support the end of section 21 evictions.”
- “Seriously tackling criminal behaviours such as anti-social street drinking, dope smokers and disgusting gardens that attract rats and pigeons.”
- “Rogue landlords n I'm fed up attending meetings in past at CLP n telling housing chuefs, MPS, police that I see daily empty houses bn rented out 2 slivak/ roma guys who decorate house then they get it, no rent up front, no bond, no checks, it's just given, while ppl like me have 2 find £1200 4 bond, month's rent upfront, CRB n council checks1 n we don't get house but these ppl who r criminals n drug dealers do get houses, it's totally wrong ”
- Stop the selective license and invest the money on cleaning the area, the streets, getting rogue thieves, over road bikes and dumping in the streets to stop. Work on getting the committee together.

- More community projections
- Police mostly seem unaware of this legislation. Council failed to use it effectively by contacting the letting agent rather than the owner. The powers of this legislation are not being used enough or in an effective method. Landlord/ owners who own mass numbers of properties have power over councils and obstruct the legislation process when it is acted on.

Conclusion

In summary, the response from the feedback survey has not had the take-up that we would have hoped for however, as this is mid-scheme, we can aim to continue trying to increase tenant and landlord engagement, work with our colleagues in Community Safety as-well with our partners at South Yorkshire Poice to try and tackle ASB and issues around litter in the affected areas. Due to the minimal responses, it is therefore assumed that most Landlords and Tenants have no issues concerning the scheme.

Recommendations

To carry out a further survey to both tenants and landlords at the end of the scheme (five-year period). We will summarise and publish the findings of this report in the same ways in which the survey was advertised (Landlords newsletter and social media) along with sending out any supportive information to tenants.